

MARAD's Transportation Leadership Program Supports DOT's Crisis Management Center

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Editor's Note: Joe Duvall, a Transportation Leadership Program Participant, volunteered for duty in the DOT Crisis Management Center (CMC) during the past hurricane season to learn more about the role the Department plays in national emergency responses.



MARAD's Joe Duvall in the DOT Crisis Management Center.

The Crisis Management Center operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is staffed by teams of two to three watchstanders per twelve-hour shift—one senior duty officer, one deputy duty officer and, if applicable, one analyst.

Just as the CMC mission declaration states, the CMC watch monitors the nation's transportation

system as well as international events and reports to senior DOT officials. This monitoring is achieved by several methods including commercial and public-sector sources. The CMC watchstanders regularly communicate with federal, state and local entities to acquire, confirm and coordinate information prior to reporting to senior DOT officials.

The CMC also serves as DOT's command center during significant events. For example, during the London transportation bombings, hurricanes Dennis, Katrina, Rita and Wilma, the CMC was "surged" with many of DOT's emergency coordinators (each operating administration has at least two) being called into the CMC for full-time operations. CMC watchstanders also coordinate the surge notification process.

DOT also has a watchstander in the Department of Homeland Security's Operations Center, but this post is typically staffed during normal business hours except in the case of a significant event, which results in a 24-hour staffing requirement.

CMC watchstanders receive, process and distribute secure communications coming into DOT. They set up and coordinate both secure and non-secure video teleconference sessions. They interface and coordinate daily with other federal emergency operations centers. Also, they conduct research, analyze information and generate reports.